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ABSTRACT

The inherent political conflict between the professional decision-maker and citizen participation in those decisions is explored in the perceptions of city managers, planning directors, and school superintendents responding to a national mail poll. From the sample of 750 administrators, there were 406 (54 percent) returns, distributed almost equally among the three professions. The primary hypotheses tested are that in democratic theory professional autonomy should be inversely related to (1) the volume and spread of group pressures, (2) related measures of community size and complexity, and (3) the length of professional experience in dealing with citizens. All three groups of urban executives, regardless of community size and professional experience, reported in large percentages that they had experienced a recent increase in group pressures upon them but that, contrary to the prime hypothesis, these pressures have not diminished their policy participation and influence with their boards, councils, or citizens in general. The findings are contraindicative not only to the empirical aspects of democratic theory but to these professions' posture of deference to political authority. Professional skills and urban political fragmentation are suggested as explanations. (Author/MLF)

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THE POLITICAL WORLD OF URBAN EXECUTIVES: A TEST OF THE DEMOCRATIC PARADIGM

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Abstract

The inherent political conflict between the professional decisionmaker and citizen participation in those decisions is explored in the perceptions of over 400 city managers, planning directors, and school superintendents in a 1981 national mail poll. The primary hypotheses tested are that in democratic theory professional autonomy should be inversely related to a) the volume and spread of group pressures, b) related measures of community size and complexity, and c) the length of professional experience in dealing with citizens. We find that all three urban executives, regardless of community size and professional experience, report in large percentages both a recent increase in group pressures upon them but, contrary to the prime hypothesis, that these pressures have not diminished their policy participation and influence with their boards, councils, or citizens in general. The findings are contraindicative to not only the empirical aspects of democratic theory but to these professions' posture of deference to political authority. Professional skills and urban political fragmentation are suggested as explanations.

THE POLITICAL WORLD OF URBAN EXECUTIVES:
A TEST OF THE DEMOCRATIC PARADIGM

The Paradigm of Urban Democracy

This article seeks to test the central paradigm of urban democracy in America from the perspective of city professional executives whose world encompasses that paradigm. The paradigm incorporates four empirical propositions about the interaction between citizens and their officials. First, for different reasons, citizens become increasingly dissatisfied with some aspect of service delivery, e.g., its volume, equity, efficiency, or honesty. Second, this dissatisfaction generates increased group mobilization to pressure urban officials for some change. Third, these officials, in turn, over unspecified periods of time and if the pressure is great enough, respond to citizen demands because of their threat to power or position and because of its legitimacy. Finally, this interaction is differentiated by variations in community contexts, i.e., the process varies with different status mixes in such places.

It may not be too much to suggest that the conflicts of urban politics over our history and the attendant scholarly research have fastened on one or more of these empirical propositions (see Lutz & Iannaccone, 1978, for an integrated use of this paradigm). Of course, we do not review that literature here, but note only that recent efforts at increasing participation in this political process have focused upon the use of neighborhood or "community" groups to deal with city hall (May, 1971; Krantz, 1975; Langton, 1978). In recent national programs greater participation was sought as a pressure

strategy to increase local officials' sensitivity and responsiveness. This strategy sought to deal with the central mediating factor of urban politics--citizen disinterest in political participation.

We seek to test this paradigm's propositions framed about several questions. Are there greater citizen group pressures? Does this pressure affect the officials' activities? And, is this process differentiated by community context? Each of these queries will have more detailed explanation and analysis later. But we stress here that the paradigm has always had an opposing counterpart. This is the belief that urban decision making is oligarchic, resistant--not submissive--to citizen demands, and that this resistance is systemic among our cities. This contrasting perception is evident in studies of urban politics, whether viewed from the top (as with community power studies)--or from the bottom (Lipsky, 1980).

Methodology

Our unit of analysis are three pivotal professional decisionmakers in urban America--the city manager, school superintendent, and planning director. Their domains vary in size and importance, but none is insignificant in urban life. Managers may deal mostly with relatively unemotional objects, like streets and garbage, while superintendents deal with objects of enormous emotion--children. Managers may face a wide range of group interests, while the other two cope with a much more restricted range. Managers and superintendents (except for a few) may be appointed by elected boards, while planners are appointed by executive officers. But taken as a set, these three urban executive

officers (hereafter UEO) are responsible for much of the policy affairs that urban scholars study and that citizens enjoy--or endure. What they do in the urban paradigm cannot be unimportant, given their scope of authority.

The conceptual framework is that of perceptual field theory. That is, how did these UEOs perceive political pressures upon them and how did they perceive their response? This perceptual concept has been useful in understanding other aspects of politics[1] at least since Plato's cave analogy. It places a cognitive screen between the stimuli of reality and an actor's consequent behavior, a screen mediating between a confusing set of reality signals and subsequent purposive actions. In this research, our interest is with how UEOs' perceive the presence of other political actors within their decisionmaking field and how they react to them. We are not examining citizens' self-reporting of contacts with lower-level urban bureaucrats (reviewed in Sharp, 1982) or the latters' perceptions and behavior towards their clients (Lipsky, 1980).

Rather, the central questions are how the highest level, executive policy makers perceive the range and volume of citizen pressures against them and whether they report effects on their decisionmaking. Such self-reporting always runs the risk of inflation of one's importance. But what if they report lack of influence? Or report resistance to citizen group pressure, contrary to the democratic paradigm? Or report deviation from their professional codes requiring that they serve, not dominate, the public? One form of validating these perceptions is the "decisional" approach familiar from community power studies, but the costs, delays, and limited sample size of such

an approach are severe constraints although our future research will proceed in this fashion. Another form of validation we are currently attempting through case studies of a set of Illinois communities in which the perceptions of UEOs and knowledgeable observers are compared. While not completed, the preliminary results find high congruence between the two sets of local perceptions of influence; that is, this validation effort finds UEOs do not systematically exaggerate their power standing.

The instrument used in this paper for tapping UEO perceptions relevant to the paradigm was a national survey of the three professions. Its development was assisted by their respective national organizations and by university specialists, and it was field-tested by local professionals in Illinois. Cities surveyed include all large and middle-sized places in the country with city managers, as well as random samples of smaller jurisdictions; in this fashion, 250 names were selected in each of the three UEO types.[2] There were 406, or 54 percent, returns from the 750 sample, distributed almost equally among the three UEOs.

Among the questions raised with these UEOs were those framing this paper. Has citizen pressure increased on them recently? Do the officials report that this pressure affects their decisionmaking? And, does their reaction depend upon the type of community they serve?

Has Citizen Pressure Increased?

The first element of the paradigm was tested by asking UEOs to estimate the degree of change, if any, in the amount of pressures they perceived coming from eight groups highly salient to their work.

However analyzed, these executives reported an increasing pressure matrix.

Of the eight groups, one set was traditional--business and labor. A second set tapped the presumed citizen group pressures; these were Clientele, Minorities, and Lay Opinion. A third set were other officials relevant to the UEOs' work--Elected Local Officials (by implication, boards, councils, mayors), State Officials, and Federal Officials. These eight were rated on a standard Likert scale that ranged perceptions of pressure volume change ("very much more" to "very much less"). Table 1 displays the distribution of the perceived demands.

(Table 1 about here)

Overall, more than half (54 percent) of all respondants perceived that four or more of these groups had increased their demands, but there were differences among UEOs. This four-group measure of increasing group demand was reported by 62 percent of the superintendents, 54 percent of the managers, but only 46 percent of the planners. This difference is not surprising, given the smaller segment of a city's range of publics which relate to planners. But we anticipated that managers would report the most pressure, given their broadest scope of policy concerns. Yet almost all three UEOs perceived more demands by at least one group; only 4.6 percent reported no increase from any group.

Table 1

Distribution of Perceived Group Pressures by Executive Type*

Executives	Number of Groups Perceived as Increasing Demands									
	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	N
Superintendents	5.8	3.3	20.8	12.5	20.0	15.8	11.7	7.5	2.5	131
Manager	2.7	3.5	3.5	19.5	24.8	16.8	15.9	7.1	6.2	127
Planner	1.5	1.5	4.5	19.4	19.4	26.1	14.9	6.7	6.0	144
All Executives	3.3	2.7	9.6	17.2	21.3	19.9	14.2	7.1	4.6	402

*In percents

But was such increase concentrated in citizen groups, a product of stimulus in recent years? Table 2 shows the distribution among all eight groups of the increased demands ("more" and "much more").

(Table 2 about here)

Citizen groups' demands are reflected in the rows for Clientele, Minorities, and Lay Opinion. Clearly, the greater pressure reported by superintendents on Table 1 also appears here. Considerably more than the other two UEOs, they reported increased demands in the three citizen categories; and they lead the other two UEOs in six of the eight groups. The decisional world of the superintendent is an increasingly turbulent one, for reasons set out elsewhere (Wirt, 1976). Too, while all three officials showed some similarities (e.g., Business), each generally perceived different clusters of salient groups. Particularly noteworthy was the differential saliency of Labor.

While some of these variations in perceived group demands will engage us later, we conclude here with a clearly affirmative answer to the query of whether citizen pressures have increased recently. That is particularly so when we note that Table 2 omits the response of "same" which, as noted later, can conceal a very large amount of perceived pressure. So this evidence is congruent with that derived elsewhere that the urban scene has indeed witnessed greater citizen pressure after almost two decades of national programs to maximize citizen participation (Langton, 1978).

Table 2

Distribution of "More" and "Much More" Perceived Demands by Executive and Group Types

Demand Groups	Supt.	Manager	Planner
Traditional:			
Business	48% (62)[1]	45% (55)	52% (73)
Labor	62% (81)	46% (57)	14% (20)
Citizen:			
Clientele	52% (66)	39% (46)	39% (54)
Minorities	50% (63)	35% (41)	35% (49)
Lay Opinion	61% (77)	46% (56)	60% (84)
Officials:			
Elected Local	34% (44)	60% (73)	66% (94)
State	50% (65)	42% (51)	34% (48)
Federal	54% (70)	46% (56)	40% (56)

[1]The first figure indicates the percent of respondents perceiving that the group had increased its demands. The second figure indicates the N of each executive type; multiple choice of groups means that the Ns sum to more than the total of each executive type.

Do Urban Executives Respond to Citizen Pressure?

We deal next with the powerful professional norm of deference to the public will, as well as with the democratic norm that citizen pressures should be effective. To that end, we employed three dimensions of this relationship: degree of UEO's perceived policy-making involvement, and degree of citizen and board acceptance of the UEO's judgment on policy. Respondents could mark both their earlier and current involvement and acceptance. In this section we will report the findings but explore whether the kind of group involved makes a difference in executive influence.

Perceived Policy Involvement

As noted later more fully, no longer (if they ever did) do these three UEOs operate by a norm which has them only administering policy made by elected officials. Rather, in norm and practice, they assume more of a role in policy making, if by no other means than providing information on policy options and, often, by indicating their preference (for each UEO type, see Booth, 1968; Tyack, 1974; Vasu, 1979). Yet professional discretion bids them to speak softly on such matters, and certainly not to indicate that their involvement with decisionmaking can be definitive. We sought to avoid lip-service reactions about deference to the public by asking UEOs to identify and evaluate their behavior.

First, UEOs were asked directly to "indicate the degree of movement away from policy neutrality toward more involvement in the policy area that you have made since your first administrative

appointment in the profession." They used a 9-point scale from "neutral" to "high involvement" on which they drew an arrow. The arrow's base marked the past and its head the present (an X marked "no change"). That is, by this means we tapped perceptions throughout a career of an increase, decrease, or no change in policy-making involvement. Table 3 displays the result.

(Table 3 about here)

On a scale which could involve a decrease (from -1 to -9) or an increase (+1 to +9) or no change, these UEOs in a very strong and parallel fashion (with no significant differences) perceived an increased involvement in policy making. Their median scores are all positive, and two-thirds to three-quarters marked an increase. Table 3 and other analyses of these data (not shown here) provide a clear answer as to whether these officials respond to group pressure. Contrarily, they saw a general and strong increase in their own policy involvement.

Perceived Acceptance of UEOs' Policy Judgments

However, involvement is not the same as having influence with either authoritative boards or councils (an indirect channel of citizen influence) or with citizens in general (a direct channel). So the UEOs were asked to judge the degree of acceptance of their judgments on policy separately by boards and citizens. As a more severe test than that for policy involvement, they were asked to compare this

Table 3

Changes in Executive Involvement in Policy Making

Executive	Distribution of Changes				Scale Median *
	Increase	Decrease	Same		
Managers	72%	4%	24%	= 100%	+3.6
Superintendents	67%	5%	28%		+4.7
Planners	77%	5%	18%		+4.4

*The scale could run from -9 (decreased involvement) to +9 (increased involvement).

acceptance currently with that "earlier in this job presently held," not since they entered the profession. They used the -9 to +9 scale and the arrow device to mark past and present perception. Table 4 summarizes the responses.

Again we find the remarkable parallelism of the three UEO perceptions that both boards and citizens increasingly accepted their

(Table 4 about here)

policy judgments. However, another sizable segment reported this rate of acceptance was unchanged, but still quite high. Overall, all UEOs on the -9 to +9 scale of change reported a median acceptance rate with boards of 5.0 previously but 7.2 currently, while the figures for citizen acceptance were respectively 4.7 and 6.8.

So again, a negative answer is provided to the question of UEO influence and citizen demands. Are these findings the result of UEOs inflating their importance? Two factors work against this possibility. Their professional norm is one of dependence upon the public they serve, and they should thus be reticent to report publicly their own influence. Also, as our current Illinois survey is showing, almost all knowledgeable observers in the communities studied also share this perception of UEO influences with boards and citizens. Clearly then, the increase in citizen pressure reported earlier has not deterred these officials from advancing their own judgments about policy and getting them accepted from the political sources that count in democratic systems.

Table 4

Changes in Board and Citizen Acceptance of Executive Policy Judgments

	Board Distribution of Changes			Citizen Distribution of Changes		
	Increase	Same	Decrease	Increase	Same	Decrease
Manager	57%	37%	5% = 100%	62%	38%	1% = 100%
Superintendent	50%	39%	12%	53%	38%	7%
Planner	57%	37%	6%	55%	42%	3%

We can interpret more finely this interaction by examining the possibility that citizen group pressures may be particularly effective. That is, the Clientele, Minorities, and Lay Opinion pressures reported in Table 2 may make a particular difference to the UEOs. To test this possibility, we regressed the change in the volume of pressure from all eight groups against measures of UEO policy-making involvement, of citizen acceptance, and of board acceptance. For each of three UEO types, the scores on amounts of pressure change from the eight groups were regressed against these three measures of current perceived executive influence.

The Group Pressure and Executive Response Thesis

The three equations for each of three UEOs were--nine equations in all--remarkably devoid of significance. Thus, in the three planning director equations, there were no significant group pressure variables at all (R^2 = .07 to .12). For the three superintendent equations, two also showed no significance (R^2 = .05, .09). But in the equation for superintendent policy-making involvement, Clientele had a significant and positive correlation. That is, the greater the Clientele pressure reported, the more the superintendents reported their own policy-making involvement (R^2 = .19; significance = .003). But note that this finding is actually contrary to the paradigm's proposition about greater pressure causing greater official deference.

Finally, for the three equations for managers, two showed no significant group pressure variables (R^2 = .08, .09). But the manager equation with policy-making involvement as a dependent variable showed significance (R^2 = .1[illegible]; significance .025). Here, the coefficient for Minorities' pressure was significant and negative,

i.e., the more this group's pressure was perceived, the less policy-making involvement the managers reported. Note that this finding is indeed consonant with the proposition of the democratic paradigm about pressure and UEO influence. But while there were other significant variables in this manager equation, the direction of their purported influence was the wrong way according to the paradigm. Thus, Lay Opinion was significant and Federal Officials almost so (.076), but both were positive, i.e., the more pressure perceived, the more managers reported increased involvement.

What is the logic of analysis for interpreting these findings? Testing the democratic paradigm involves the null hypothesis: the more citizen or group pressures exist, the less influence the UEOs possess. If a negative finding between pressure and influence exists, the paradigm is substantiated. However, if a positive relationship between pressure and influence is found, the results are unknown because of the possibilities of the "law of anticipated reactions." That is, it is not known if UEOs possess influence because of, or in spite of, citizen pressure. Finally, if no relationship between pressure and influence is found, it indicates that the null hypothesis statement of the democratic paradigm should be rejected. In other words, more citizen or group pressure does not mean less UEO influence. In that case, such independence of the two variables is poor evidence that they interact in the direction for which the paradigm calls.

What did the analysis show? There were 72 possibilities of significant group coefficients for testing the paradigm in this fashion (three equations for each UEO type and 8 pressure groups x 3

dependent variables of perceived influence). But only two of the nine UEO equations were significant. And, even in these, only one group pressure variable supported the proposition that urban officials' influence is reduced with greater group pressure. Two other group variables in this equation actually supported the opposite conclusion. Even this trace evidence was scattered between managers and superintendents, while it did not show up at all for planners.

Hence, we conclude from these different analytical methods that UEOs reported their influence in a highly parallel fashion. They are more involved--and more successfully so--in policy making in their domains. But most important, the logic of analysis for testing this paradigm demonstrates that there is no association between pressure and influence with this data source. The one clear chain of associations which would support it--a negative relationship between the two--is not found in our work in strength to confirm the democratic paradigm's central proposition.

Does Executive Reaction to Pressure Depend Upon the Community?

A familiar part of the urban democracy paradigm is that different places make for different politics and policies. It is not merely a distinction between farm and city, or between central city and suburb or even between suburbs themselves (Wood, 1964; Williams et al., 1965; Wirt et al., 1972; Minar, 1966). The theoretical underpinning is equally familiar. Larger places encompass more social diversity in the socio-economic bases of their population. This condition creates a greater potential for conflict over policy outcomes responding to this greater social mosaic. The result is a greater variation in the

groups served or in the policy profile in larger places. The corollary is that the smaller places have less diversity, less conflict potential, and less variation in politics and policies. And between these extremes is some regular difference.

What then can we posit about the intervening influence of community context and the decisional roles which UEOs perceived? Essentially, the proposition for testing is whether the greater group potential of the larger communities does indeed generate more pressure perceived by these officials and hence--in keeping with the basic paradigm--reduces their perceived influence. We employ two approaches to this complex question. We use difference of means tests to compare this interaction in the central city, suburban, and non-metropolitical locales of our respondents. Then we develop more varied measures of community context which are regressed against UEO reports of their policy making involvement and of their board and citizen acceptance.

Community Type, Group Pressures, and Executive Influence

The designation of central city, suburb, and non-metropolitan provides a crude, non-interval measure of community context familiar in the literature. The three are seen as shorthand symbols of community differentiation among three UEO types--three measures of citizen group pressure (Clientele, Minorities, and Lay Opinion) and three measures of UEO policy influence (policy-making involvement, board acceptance, and citizen acceptance). The resulting matrix offers 27 opportunities for finding an association of pressure and official influence. But only five significant associations were found, noted in Table 5, and only two of these actually linked pressure and influence.

(Table 5 about here)

Table 5 tells us, not surprisingly, that managers and planners reported more pressures from Minorities in urban compared to surburban, places; the same held for Minorities and planners in urban and non-metropolitan locales. But nothing of this kind was reported by superintendents, nor did this association appear for other combinations of community types. Just two of the significant associations did relate to executive influence. Suburban managers claimed a higher policy-making involvement than their counterparts in non-metropolitan towns, which Wood (1959: p. 163) noted over two decades ago. Recall that there are very few large cities with manager-council forms of government, so we have little on which to judge the large city situation. But again, this linkage is noteworthy for its absence in other comparisons in other community types and for its absence in either the superintendent or planner sets. Finally, non-metropolitan planners reporting a citizen acceptance almost significantly higher than that in urban places, but this relationship did not exist for other combinations of locales and not at all for the other two UEO types.

The powerful finding here is the absence of the purported relationship between citizen pressures and UEO influence as differentiated by community type. Given three measures of citizen pressure and three measures of executive influence, the UEO perceptions were remarkably uniform in their lack of association, except in two

Table 5

Significant Difference of Means Tests of Citizen Pressure, Executive Influence, and Community Type

Executive*	Community Type Compared	Significant Variable	Community Type With Higher Mean
Manager	Urban/Suburban	Minority (.016)	Urban
	Suburban/ Non-metropolitan	Policy Maki Involvement (.029)	Suburban
Planner	Urban/Suburban	Minority (.000)	Urban
	Urban/ Non-metropolitan	Minority (.020)	Urban
	Urban/ Non-metropolitan	Citizen Acceptance (.052)	Non-metropolitan

*Superintendents showed no significant differences.

cases.

However, community type is only a very rough indication of urban variation so we turned to more complex measures. A factor analysis of the returning samples' community characteristics produced six different dimensions of community context. These were: size and governmental resources (e.g., population); citizen affluence (e.g., per capita income); type of jurisdiction (urban vs. non-urban); ethnicity (percent black); type of election (partisan vs. non-partisan), and suburbanism (e.g., percent homes owner-occupied). We used these characteristics of the UEOs' communities as independent variables in a regression upon three executive influence measures.

The results were overwhelming in their lack of significance. None of the three regression equations for each of the three UEO types was significant. There were a few individual contextual variables found significant but only for planners, and none for superintendents (R^2 = .07 to .11) and managers (R^2 = .04 to .11). Planners had jurisdiction significantly (.046), albeit barely, related to citizen acceptance, i.e., planners reported higher acceptance of their policy judgements by citizens in non-urban communities. Too, planners' reports of policy-making involvement were barely significant (.045) in type of election, i.e., they reported higher involvement where there were nonpartisan elections.

So once again, UEO's perceived influence, tested by three dependent measures, is not differentiated by community context. Most striking is the failure of the variable of population size to be linked significantly to executive influence for any UEO in this analysis. Why that could be will be addressed shortly.

Relationship to Other Research

This research does not stand alone in challenging the paradigm of urban democracy in America. Recent research has explored UEOs in their decisional contexts of communities, large and small. This work finds executives taking a much more assertive stance toward influencing policy making than expected. Whether using sample surveys of perceptions and attitudes or matched field studies, such work wipes out any lingering notion that the UEO is a passive administrator of policy made by authoritative bodies. Rather, as the next section notes, their decisional influence is augmented by their professional resources as well as by the fragmentation of the urban policy world.

For example, managers have been encouraged by their own profession much more to take policy influence roles. Note the differing statements over fifty years about that role, found in the ICMA'S Code of Ethics (Booth, 1968: p. 93):

> 1924: "It is the council, the elected repesentatives of the people, who primarily determine municipal policies and are entitled to credit for their fulfillment."
>
> 1936: "In order that policy may be intelligent and effecive, he [the manager] provides the council with information and advice [on policy matters]."
>
> 1952: "[He/She is a] community leader [who] submits policy proposals to the council and provides the council with facts and advice on matters of policy to give the council a basis for making decisions on community goals."

Moreover, managers have reported on national surveys (reviewed in Booth, 1968; Loveridge, 1971) that they should and do play a leading role in community policy making (82 percent in small towns), including

initiating policy and making their recommendation among options. The way they do this is not studied in our research, but as one observer concludes of small-town managers, "They turn to individuals mainly for advice, and generally... in a confidential, private way, [but] use organizations mainly as a sounding board for the discussion of ideas (Booth, 1968: p. 12--italics in original)."

Further, in the late 1960s superintendents were reported (Zeigler and Jennings, 1974) national survey to dominate their boards. While that interpretation has been challenged (Boyd, 1976), it is clear that educational administrators are trained to exert leadership in educational policy. This is true whether taught earlier in this century to be "managers" or more recently to be "politicians" (e.g., Sergiovanni et al., 1980: chaps. 1-3). Indeed, the type of professional training, or the amount of it, may hinder the superintendent's effectiveness (Zeigler et al., 1981a, 1981b).

But their history shows clearly that they were to pursue in organization "the one best system" in which they were "mongers of virtue" (Tyack, 1974; Tyack & Hansot, 1982).

As for planners, they have divided among themselves as to the degree of advocacy they should exert in policy making (Vasu, 1979; Howe, 1980; Catanese, 1978). Empirical studies of planners' preferences since Rabinowitz's seminal work (1969: chap 4) have reported some combination of roles ranging between that of technician and a more active seeker of policy. Thus, a national sample recently reported that one-half had adopted a "hybrid" role, combining technical and political elements, while another 18 percent self-idenfified entirely as "politicians" (Howe, 1980: p. 400).

Planner dominance has been particularly evident in recent federal programs to build up citizen representation; but a recent survey of such health organizations found the "producers" dominating the "users" (Checkoway, 1982).

While there has been little comparative analysis of different UEOs, as presented in this article (however, see Zeigler et al., 1981a, 1981b; Stillman, 1974), the empirical studies of the single executive type just cited do assemble an impressive record of their activist role. So our work joins others in challenging the notion of an urban executive not involved in direct policy making. Also, the success that UEOs have reported here clearly challenges any notion of the power of citizen groups consistently to reduce that influence. Citizen participation has been limited at the best (Langton, 1978), even though for the participant it can contribute importantly to his or her own self (Salisbury, 1980).

The Sources of Executive Influence

What contributes to the power which our UEOs perceive? Several sources should be kept in mind. First, UEOs are also professionals, and by definition (Wirt, 1981) they receive their signals for action and their normative values about policy more from professional networks than from politicians and citizen groups. So, one source of their influence lies in their acceptance of the external, universal norms of the profession. Of course, local power contexts will strain and deflect these external signals to the executive. But over time, the professional norm is persistent, while local action is not. Consequently over time, external norms frame much local policy. That may be why our UEO sample reported contradictory perceptions--greater

group pressure vs. greater executive policy involvement and acceptance.

This professional networking leads to the standardization and routinization of decisions about delivering public services which can resist political pressures. Evidence suggests that it is a force that overcomes differing kinds of politics. A recent comparison (Mladenka, 1981) of two cities with reformed vs. machine political systems (Houston and Chicago), found that differing political processes do not cause different bureaucratic responsiveness. Rather, in both places the distribution of such responses was quite similar. Any variations in responses were more attributable to different levels of resources and to the procedures that bureaucracies themselves developed to service citizens. In short, the purported use of such services by Chicago aldermen to "help my friends and shaft my enemies" (Mdalenka, 1981: p. 712, citing Rakove, 1979) was more talk than reality, in the face the pressure of professional bureaucrats to simplify and routinize their work.

A second possible reason for UEO resistance to citizen pressure lies in the disjointed nature of the policy worlds of urban America which produces what Yates has termed "street-fighting pluralism." That is, when groups inject new ideas into the local policy system, they face

> a political and administrative system that is fragmented to the point of chaos. Further, there is no coherent administrative order to implement and control new policies. What exists instead is an extreme pluralism of political, administrative, and community interests... and in this context, the likely fate of the new policy initiative is that it will be ripped apart in the street fight between political interests (Yates, 1976: p. 149).

So our executives can report greater group demands, but these are too

often unfocused, confused, contradictory, and, in time, lack persistence. Rabinowvitz (1969) found that planners were more effective in communities with fragmented rather than unified, political systems. Superintendents increasingly find themselves working amid a host of programs with different constituencies and linkages to state and federal agencies (Wirt and Kirst, 1982: pp. 146-48). And managers have always been socialized to the naturalness of policy conflict and structural fragmentation (Booth, 1968; Zeigler et al., 1981a, 1981b).

In such an environment, the professional local executive has the resources that more often count--maze wisdom, persistence, group cohorts, technical knowledge, information control (Forester, 1982), and so on. Amid external policy demands permeating the urban scene, the local executive can utilize external linkages to resist the essentially divisive nature of group pressure in their policy systems.

A third possible explanation of the UEO influence reported here may lie in their ability to manage conflict. Work by Zeigler and his associates among superintendents and managers in California and Illinois provides an original comparative analysis of such skills. These involve the following:

> By anticipating that a passive conflict may become active, it is possible to regulate its expansion [and so] maintain some control of the agenda, some control over the participants, and hence, some influence over the resolution of conflict A less overtly political strategy is to contain conflict by individualizing it... School managers, we know, spend more time resolving individual complaints than answering requests or demands for policy decisions (Zeigler, et al., 1981a: p. 12).

A final explanation of executive influence may rest upon their role in transmitting from outside the city walls not merely their professional norms but the mandates of external governments. State and

federal mandates often constrain what local groups may seek, although they may be welcomed by yet other groups for the expanded services they bring. External administrators are often themselves professionals, fusing their universalistic norms with external authority. That is, they often incorporate such norms in laws to which local authorities must reluctantly accede, despite local group pressure (e.g., Milner & Hottois, 1975).

This concept of the city caught in a web of public and private sectors implies that such extramural influences diminish its autonomy. First set out conceptually by Warren (1978) and later illustrated in the individual town, small and large (Vidich and Bensman, 1958; Wirt, 1974), as well as in comparative urban studies (Peterson, 1981), this reality of external constraint acts as a powerful depressant on local initiatives in policy matters. If so, the urban executive, besides anticipating and individualizing local policy pressures, stands as a conduit of powerful outside authority and resources. In such a national network, the UEO may well perceive greater group pressures--as here reported--but know also that the office possesses institutional resources to resist those working against professional norms and extramural mandates.

These executives do not win all the battles, of course. On some kinds of policy issues, the local political culture cannot be overcome. Elazar's concept of political culture has been shown to mark local politics distinctively, not merely in "cities on the prairie" but on such matters as the behavior of local political executives and bureaucrats, as well as on even that intangible factor "the quality of life" (Elazar, 1970; Axies, 1969; Dohm, 1970; Kincaid,

1980). Too, ethnic job patronage is another factor that stamps urban political cultures and constrains UEOs in large cities (Clark, 1975).

Despite scattered victories for the paradigm of urban democracy, there are many other signs of its limits, besides what we report of these UEO perceptions. Other factors point the same way--endemically low turn-out in elections and referenda, continuing deterioration of the political party as a vehicle for group interests, and indifferent involvement of citizens in advisory mechanisms. All demonstrate an absence of citizen involvement which augments the ongoing influence of the urban executive in local policy making.

Implications for Research

We return at the conclusion to several implications in the findings of this research. These suggest important dimensions of urban politics and policies which need further research by other means.

1. The strength of these officials' reported influence implies that citizen pressure, direct or indirect, more often will not result in less UEO influence. These data point up a constant of professional power in urban decision making, belying any simple notion of democratic control. It is not merely that "street-level bureaucrats" (Lipsky, 1980) resist individual level pressures on policy delivery. More, their chiefs seem to resist it when it aggregates into group pressures. They may be doing so for what they deem good intentions, but that well-paved road is not the same that the democratic paradigm seeks to travel. Any renewed interest in community power study or in citizen participation must pay more attention to these professional executives and their national norms and networks, than was done some years back.

2. The lack of contextual variation in UEOs' perceived influence suggests that this professional influence is a pervasive aspect of urban democracy. Undifferentiated by community qualities which research finds important for other aspects of urban politics, such executive influence may well be a systemic quality of American communities today. Large or small, located in the urban center, on its rim or beyond, cities and towns are arenas where UEOs everywhere influence policy making. And that influence, by their own perceptions, we do not find related to the volume and origins of group pressures.

3. If this professional influence is systemic, it is one aspect of the power of professions in other institutions of the modern industrial state. Professionals during this century have increased in numbers and influence (Ben-David, 1963), quadrupling in the census from 1870 to 1950 (Goode, 1957). A recent review (Wirt, 1981) has shown how they are not only an essential dimension of the modern state (Goode, 1960), but a basic political factor in tension with citizen interests. For despite their abjurations of things political, professions at their heart are indeed political because they receive a grant of autonomy from the community in exchange for the value of the services they provide. But what is granted can be taken away or modified when disagreements arise from the laity about services they are provided. What is evident for medicine, law, or welfare must even more clearly be the case for those professions that seek to assist elected policy makers. There is evidence in our research that some UEOs still adopt a technical, non-political stance, although less so for managers than the other two. But their information control (Forester, 1982), agenda setting, and option endorsement, as well as

policy administration, are increasingly appreciated among their cohorts as political acts.

4. Finally, the strength and extent of UEOs' perceived influence is not the whole account of urban policy making. Of course, these professionals sometimes lose to their appointing agencies in policy preferences, although the extent is rarely studied. Also, and more important for democratic control, they are sometimes removed from office for their inability to control conflict or to respond to citizens demands; but again, the frequency is not well studied. When these UEOs report board and citizen acceptance of their policy judgments, they may be responding only to efforts at influencing those policies which these significant others deem not crucial. Research is also needed on how UEO success is mediated by the degree of importance they and others attach to their policy recommendations. Are they successful on the issues most important, or least important, to them? Further, does the political culture of a city (Kincaid, 1980) affect that professional role? We have had some evidence that it does for planners (Rabinovitz, 1969), managers (Dohm, 1970), and superintendents (Kimbrough, 1964).

In addition, more is needed about how success is influenced by different roles adopted by UEOs to deal with political tasks. It seems likely that different role behaviors will be adapted for a milieu where there is high group pressure and much acceptance of the UEOs policy judgments, compared to milieux with other combinations of these high-low and much-little dimensions. Finally, this question of citizen-executive linkage must deal with the "law of anticipated reactions." It fuzzies any effort at empirical research, no matter

how intuitively appealing it may seem.

So, while this article reports local policy executives' large estimate of their pressures and successes, the picture cannot be taken as complete on this evidence alone. A more careful analysis involves understanding the kinds of issues where there is success, the political culture of the community, and the quality of the professional's leadership roles.

Footnotes

1. Perceptual analysis has figured in partisan identification studies (Nie, Verba, and Petro, 1976: chap. 4); Congressional roles (Mathews, 1964; Fenno, 1978: chaps. 1,3,4); and local council "policy maps" (Eulau and Prewitt, 1973: chaps. 26-27).

2. Because managers do not extend to the larger American cities, the three samples could not be congruent in population size. The intermediate and large city category for managers ranged upwards from 60,000 and for the other two upwards from 100,000. In the total sample, all cities over 60,000 in the mailed sample constituted 53 percent vs. 62.8 percent of the returned sample. The smaller community samples were computer generated for superintendents but randomly selected (every Nth name) for the other two positions.

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